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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1095
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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 4637
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 6589
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 9199
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RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 000500

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[1](#)1. Mideast

[1](#)2. Iran-Iraq Relations

Key stories in the media:

The Jerusalem Post reported that the prevalent feeling in Jerusalem

is that despite the recent flare-up in Gaza, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's discussions in Cairo will focus on securing an agreement between Egypt, the PA, and Hamas regarding the border situation. Such an agreement, according to this assessment, would be used to bring the PA back to the negotiating table. The Jerusalem Post cited assessments in Israel on the eve of Secretary Rice's visit that the PA expects her to provide it with a "face-saving device" that will allow it to return to negotiations. Israel Radio reported that Rice, en route to the Middle East, called for the resumption of Israel-PA negotiations. Ha'aretz reported that PM Ehud Olmert will tell Secretary Rice today that Israel wants to renew talks with the PA quickly. Maariv reported that Rice's current trip has turned into a rescue mission of the peace process. Israel Radio reported that in Cairo, Secretary Rice reiterated charges that Hamas is responsible for the latest violence, and demanded that Israel refrain from hurting civilians. Citing news agencies, Ha'aretz reported that the White House blamed Hamas on Monday for sparking the recent fighting between Israel and the Palestinians. Gordon Johndroe, a spokesman for the National Security Council, was quoted as saying: "The number one thing that has to happen is that Hamas has got to stop targeting Israeli citizens with rockets. It must stop."

Ha'aretz quoted a GOI source as saying on Monday that Jerusalem is disappointed with the latest round of sanctions against Iran passed late Monday night by the UN Security Council. Israel sees them as soft, especially with regard to the list of individuals and institutions on which the sanctions would be imposed. Maariv and Israel Radio reported that French President Nicolas Sarkozy was instrumental in getting the resolution passed. Ha'aretz and Israel Radio quoted FM Tzipi Livni as saying on Monday that the Security Council's resolution was another essential step expressing the understanding that the international community must not give up and stand idly by. Ha'aretz quoted Livni as saying: "Any additional decision by any country, member or group, adds more weight to create the mass of sanctions needed to stop Iran." For their part, Yediot and Israel Radio said that Israel, and in particular the Foreign Ministry, expressed satisfaction over the resolution.

Ha'aretz quoted legal experts in the government as saying that it is difficult to decide whether Israel can move Palestinian civilians from areas in the northern Gaza Strip where rockets are fired against Israel. They say international law is based on precedents, and in Israel's case the matter is in many ways unprecedented. Defense Minister Ehud Barak had requested legal advice from Attorney General Menachem Mazuz and the military advocate general on the possibility of moving Palestinian civilians from the rocket-launching areas. The idea would be to give the Israel Defense Forces greater room to maneuver and target rocket crews without endangering civilians. The debate is featured in many media.

Major media quoted PM Olmert as saying on Monday before the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that Israel's activity in Gaza has not stopped. The media, which said that Hamas has proclaimed victory, reported that senior Hamas official Mahmoud Zahar declared on Monday that Israel failed to stop the rockets and that Gilad Shalit will not be released unless Israel accepts all his captors' demands. The Jerusalem Post quoted an IDF Intelligence officer as saying on Monday before the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that Iranian technology and intelligence was used by Palestinian gunmen in Gaza. Maariv reported on the poor performance of Israel's public relations during the operation. The Jerusalem Post featured PR efforts by Avichay Adree, the IDF Spokesman's Office's lone Arabic speaker.

Citing the German press agency DPA, Ha'aretz quoted Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas as saying on Monday that he was ready to mediate a truce between Israel and Hamas. Abbas called on Israel "to accept this initiative." The Jerusalem Post reported that on Monday Italian FM Massimo D'Alema called on Israel to negotiate with Hamas.

Major media reported that authorities have acknowledged that a Grad rocket that hit Ashkelon on Monday barely missed the house of Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter. Both Yediot and Maariv led with the mental stress suffered by the residents of Sderot and the surrounding communities. Israel Radio

reported that last night a Qassam rocket caused great damage to a Sderot house that was vacated on Monday.

The Jerusalem Post cited confidential documents obtained by Vanity Fair magazine, according to which President Bush is said to have approved a covert initiative to overthrow the Hamas government shortly after Hamas won the January 2006 parliamentary elections.

Citing news agencies reports, Ha'aretz quoted the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem as saying on Monday that more than half of the Palestinians killed in the Gaza Strip in IDF operations in recent were not involved in the fighting. This statement came after IDF Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi issued a statement saying that 90 percent of those killed were in fact armed militants

Leading media reported that last night police released a West Bank settler who shot and killed a Palestinian teen, who had been with a group that was throwing rocks along a West Bank road. Military investigators cleared him of inappropriate actions and the police are likely to follow suit. The media also reported that four Palestinians were arrested on Monday after they attacked two Jerusalem municipal inspectors, who had been driving in East Jerusalem. The inspectors escaped after a minute under assault, which several media called an attempted lynch.

Israel Radio cited the concern of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that Hizbullah might reignite the Lebanon-Israel border. The radio reported that Ban received documents from Israel that Hizbullah is rearming.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Sunday in London Alan Rusbridger, the editor of the British daily The Guardian, apologized for an editorial in his newspaper that compared Israel's 2002 Operation Defensive Shield in Jenin with the 9/11 attack on New York. Ha'aretz reported that 50 Italian film industry leaders have signed a petition of in support of Israeli-Arab film director Muhammad Bakri, who made "Jenin, Jenin," a controversial movie about Operation Defensive Shield. The film makers warn that the legal actions in Israel against "Jenin, Jenin" might "turn into a kind of attack the right to freedom of information and freedom of artistic expression in Israel."

The Jerusalem Post reported that the Jewish vote could swing today's Ohio and Texas Democratic primaries.

Maariv reported that on Monday the High Court of Justice ruled that Laurie Sue Goldman, who is wanted in the U.S. for alleged extortion and who escaped to Israel seven years ago, will be extradited to the U.S.

11. Mideast:

Summary:

Senior Editor Nehemia Shtrasler wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Indeed, signing an agreement with Hamas is risky.... But it also harbors hope."

Liberal columnist Ofer Shelach wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "For almost a decade not only have Israelis fed and provided for the IDF, but they have also been serving as a defensive shield for it."

Veteran journalist and anchor Dan Margalit wrote in the independent Israel Hayom: "Israel has had its share of bitter experience with forced respites.... No such commitment exists in Gaza."

Chief Economic Editor Sever Plotker opined in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "[Ariel] Sharon would not have waited such a long time with a correct response, nor would he have used the doctrine of disproportionate, incorrect response as has been used in Gaza over the past several days."

Block Quotes:

I. "Talk to Hamas"

Senior Editor Nehemia Shtrasler wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (3/4): "People in such a difficult situation [Gazans] have nothing left but their self-respect..... So there is no escape but to talk to Hamas. We cannot choose our enemies.... Indeed, signing an agreement with Hamas is risky. An agreement could weaken Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, whom Israel sees as a fitting partner. But it also harbors hope. We could make a cease-fire arrangement consisting of stopping the rocket fire in exchange for stopping the assassinations. We could agree on a prisoner exchange and bring Gilad Shalit home.... Once we didn't want to talk to the PLO and Arafat. Then we humiliated Abbas and didn't want to give him any achievement during the disengagement. Now we don't want to talk to Hamas. So the struggle will continue -- until a catastrophe occurs, on their side or ours. Only then will the leaders be forced to sit down and talk around the negotiating table."

II. "Gaza, Like in Lebanon"

Liberal columnist Ofer Shelach wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (3/4): "Israel started an operation to vanquish with military means an enemy that is not a state and does not have an army.... Everything the enemy needs to do is to shoot the last round and proclaim victory. This does not mean that it won. There are no victors in this war. But it makes us feel that it has not lost. No strategic debates will help in the face of such a reality.... For almost a decade not only have Israelis fed and provided for the IDF, but they have also been serving as a defensive shield for it, at the service of a regime that knows that there is no more legitimacy for an operation than the killing of civilians. This can be changed if we remove the curtain of belligerency from our eyes -- for this there is no need for a commission of investigation."

III. "No Respite"

Veteran journalist and anchor Dan Margalit wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (3/4): "When [we] have no intention of permitting Hamas to replenish its troops and to resume its rocket fire at Israel, it must not be permitted to carry out artificial victory marches in the Gaza Strip.... Israel has had its share of bitter experience with forced respites.... No such commitment exists in Gaza. Operation Luke-Warm Spring has to follow Operation Hot Winter only to be followed by Operation Blazing Summer and Operation Rainy Autumn until the Hamas regime in Gaza is destabilized. Stopping the operations now will create a situation that we are familiar with from southern Lebanon in the 1990s, when rocket fire and the counter-operations ended with formulas that never served Israel's interests."

IV. "The Doctrine of Disproportionate Response"

Chief Economic Editor Sever Plotker opined in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (3/4): "I do not know whether [Ariel] Sharon had a strategy prepared in advance for dealing with the firing of rockets from the Gaza Strip on Israeli communities after disengagement. One thing I am sure of, both from having known him and from personal conversations with him: Sharon would not have waited such a long time with a correct response, nor would he have used the doctrine of disproportionate, incorrect response as has been used in Gaza over the past several days.... It is said that Ariel Sharon went ballistic the first time he was told by high-ranking officers that 'there is nothing we can do' against suicide terrorism. Despite his age, or perhaps because of it, Sharon rejected the conventional, routine, self-evident solutions. He looked for the sophisticated, the surprising, the creative, and therefore the efficient. If the prime minister who replaced him had gotten as angry the first time he was told 'there is nothing we can do' against the Qassam and Grad rockets from Gaza, we would likely be in a different situation today."

12. Iran-Iraq Relations:

Summary:

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "The last thing Iraqi leaders -- or other Arab states, for that matter -- want is to be left alone with Iran, particularly an Iran armed with nuclear weapons."

Block Quotes:

"Two Irans, or Two Iraqs"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (3/4):
"This week's historic visit by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to Iraq, reportedly the first of an Iranian president since Iraq's founding, marks a watershed moment. It symbolizes the choice between two radically different futures: one of two Irans, the other of two Iraqs. Ostensibly, the visit is one of friendship, of two countries establishing new bonds.... The friendliness of this visit, however, should confuse no one. The last thing Iraqi leaders -- or other Arab states, for that matter -- want is to be left alone with Iran, particularly an Iran armed with nuclear weapons. And the last thing the Iranian regime -- and Iraq's Arab neighbors, for that matter -- want is for Iraq to become a flourishing and peaceful democracy. The Iran-Iraq embrace, therefore, is illusory and unstable. It reflects a very temporary balance of power, fear and isolation. If the current Iranian regime becomes a nuclear power, it will work to turn Iraq and other Arab regimes into obedient satellites, like Syria. This will not be simple in Iraq, despite the Shi'ite-led government there. The Iraqi people and government have no interest in Iranian-style clerical rule. Even the Iraqi Shi'ite clerical leadership is not only against becoming an Iranian satrap, but against clerical rule in principle. These Iraqi religious leaders believe that the Iranian revolution is heretical. A nuclear Iran, in the context of a retreating United States, however, would have ways of dealing with the dual Iraqi threat of presenting a democratic model and an alternative center of Shi'ite leadership.... The U.S. advances are real, but so is their reversibility if Iran were to go nuclear and the U.S. were to withdraw."

JONES